

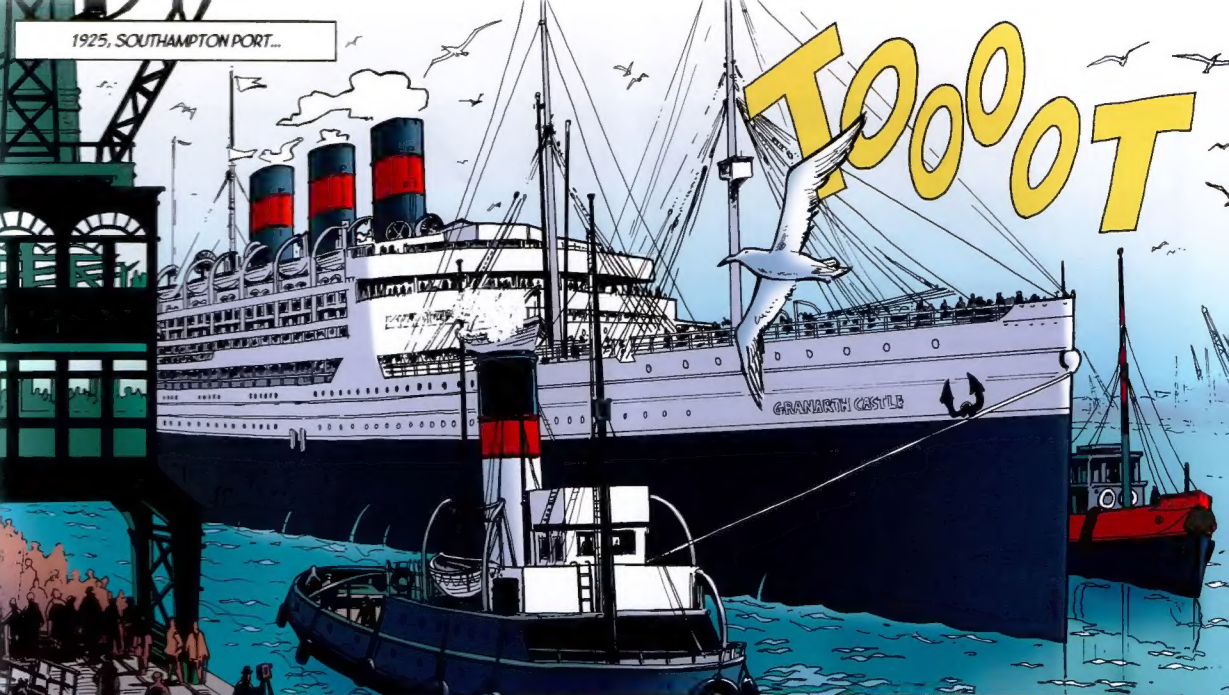


AGATHA CHRISTIE

# THE SECRET OF CHIMNEYS

ADAPTED BY FRANÇOIS RIVIÈRE  
ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENCE SUHNER

1925, SOUTHAMPTON PORT...



Hello, good old England!  
Delightful to see you again!

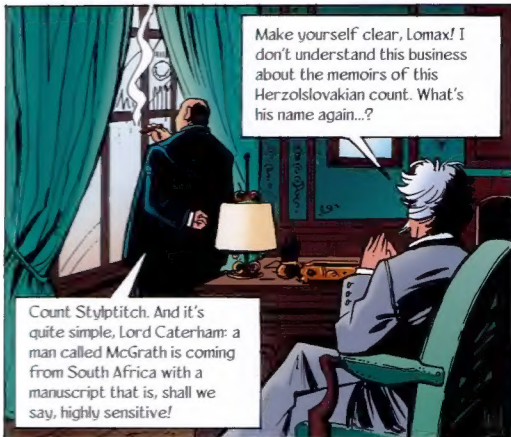


Get your *Evening Standard*!

No thanks, old chap. I'd need the last  
seven years' worth to catch up!



Make yourself clear, Lomax! I  
don't understand this business  
about the memoirs of this  
Herzolslovakian count. What's  
his name again...?



Count Stylptitch. And it's  
quite simple, Lord Caterham: a  
man called McGrath is coming  
from South Africa with a  
manuscript that is, shall we  
say, highly sensitive!



Stylptitch died two months  
ago. He was the most  
influential man in the  
Republic of Herzolslovakia.  
A great statesman — but  
also a villain! The revelations  
in the manuscript entrusted  
to McGrath could cause an  
international crisis!

What?! But Prince  
Michael, the heir to their  
throne, is expected this  
weekend for a diplomatic  
meeting at Chimneys  
Manor!

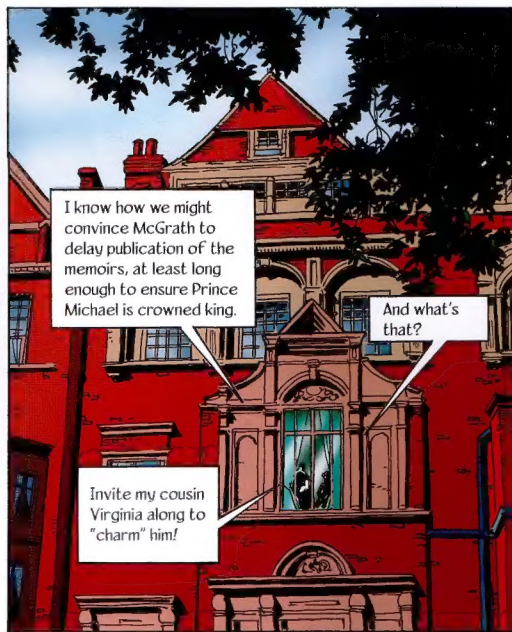






There's only one way of defusing this situation — you must invite McGrath to Chimneys.

Why do all these political and financial meetings always have to take place at my house? OK, so be it!



I know how we might convince McGrath to delay publication of the memoirs, at least long enough to ensure Prince Michael is crowned king.

And what's that?

Invite my cousin Virginia along to "charm" him!



Good Lord! It's time to go to my club. You'll take care of everything, won't you, Lomax?

*Loathsome man! But Virginia Revel will be delightful!*



LORD CATERHAM DEPARTS...

The coming weekend is sure to be deadly boring. I much prefer peace and quiet. At least my daughter Bundle will be there to assist me.



The Blitz Hotel! One might as well be comfortable...



I can offer you a suite with a view over Green Park, sir.

That will be perfect, old chap!



*This must be our man...!*



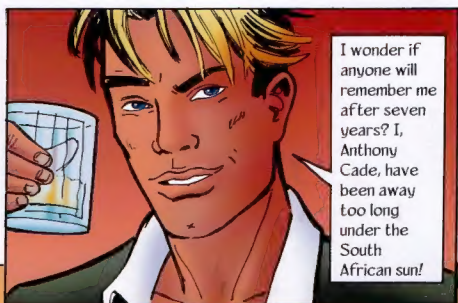


Fabulous! I just need a good bath to put my thoughts in order...

Thank you, sir.



But before that, a celebratory whisky to toast the arrival of "Jimmy McGrath" in London!



I wonder if anyone will remember me after seven years? I, Anthony Cade, have been away too long under the South African sun!



My word! If it isn't good old Jimmy McGrath!

Tony! What are you doing here?



I was. But I've found something else I must tell you about.

I organize sightseeing trips for tourists. And you, are you still digging for gold?



You've heard of Herzoslovakia? I got to know their exiled Prime Minister, Count Stylptich, four years ago in Paris, but we lost touch. Then two weeks ago I got a parcel containing a manuscript...

His memoirs? But why entrust them to you?

I saved his life one night when some hired thugs attacked him in the street. I guess he no longer trusted anybody else. His note said that if I deliver the manuscript safely to his London publisher, they will pay me one thousand pounds!







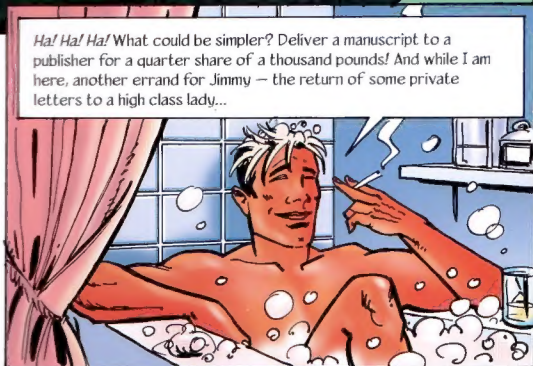
It has come at a very awkward moment, as I believe I've struck it rich here.

But a thousand pounds in the hand is worth much more than your mythical gold, isn't it?



No, this is real treasure! So, will you go instead of me? I'll give you 250 pounds if you go to England under the name of Jimmy McGrath!

Why not? It's a deal!



Ha! Ha! Ha! What could be simpler? Deliver a manuscript to a publisher for a quarter share of a thousand pounds! And while I am here, another errand for Jimmy — the return of some private letters to a high class lady...



...to be handed over personally to save her from public embarrassment. A certain Virginia Revel.



MEANWHILE...

Eversleigh! This is what you've got to do! Go at once to Mrs Revel's residence at 487 Pont Street, and tell her that I would like to meet her at four o'clock today about an important matter. It's most urgent!

Right, Mr Lomax. I'll do it straight away, sir.



Hoorah! Bill Eversleigh out on a mission!



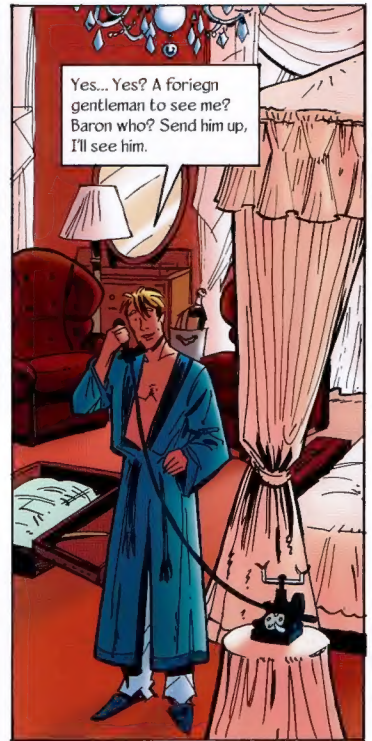
Right. Virginia Revel. Now calm down!





Hullo, Bill. Why aren't you at the Foreign Office?

I've brought an urgent message from Mr Lomax.



Yes... Yes? A foreign gentleman to see me? Baron who? Send him up, I'll see him.



But why didn't you just telephone?

I told Lomax it was out of order so he'd send me. I do love you, Virginia!



I know, Bill. I know... I should like every nice man in the world to be in love with me... Why don't you invite me out to lunch? You can tell me what that old clown Lomax wants from me...



Mr McGrath, I am honoured to be received by you. I am Baron Lolopretjzyl.



Should I known you, Baron?



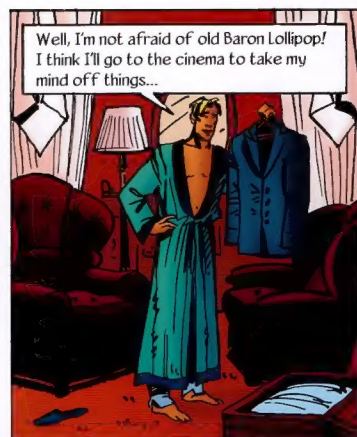
I am the London representative of the Loyalist Party of Herzoslovakia. The time has come to restore the monarchy and to crown His Highness Prince Michael.

I see!



Everything is arranged, but I am here to avoid any scandals. Coming straight to the point, Mr McGrath, the Loyalist Party is offering you 1,500 pounds in exchange for Count Stylptitch's manuscript...

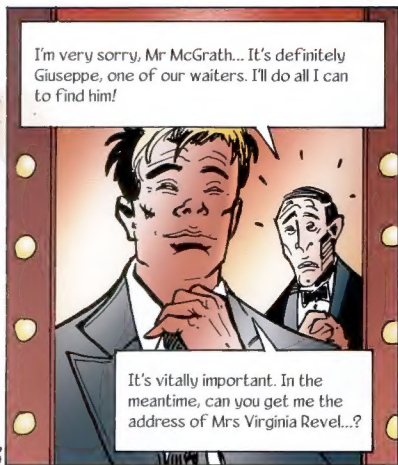




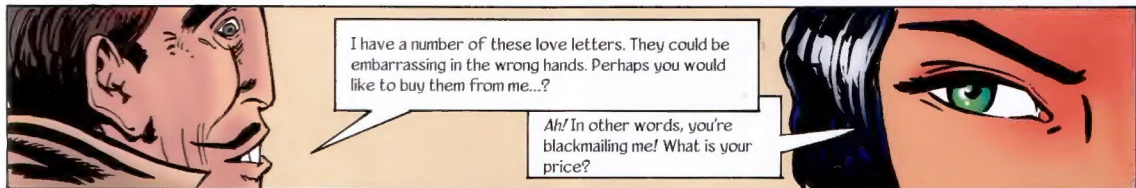








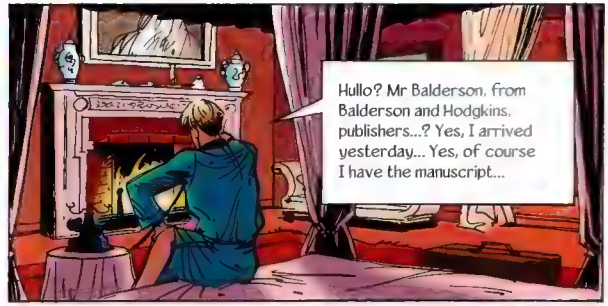












Hullo? Mr Balderson, from Balderson and Hodgkins, publishers...? Yes, I arrived yesterday... Yes, of course I have the manuscript...



What? I'm in danger? You think I shouldn't try to bring it myself... What do you suggest? Very well, I'll wait for one of your people to collect it. Good day!



Well, that's easy. The publishers are sending someone tonight. He'll take the manuscript in exchange for a cheque. Well, after all this, the main thing is that I get that damned cheque for 1,000 pounds!



A LITTLE LATER...

I'm Jimmy McGrath... Here's the manuscript. Be careful not to get yourself killed while leaving the hotel!

My name is Holmes!



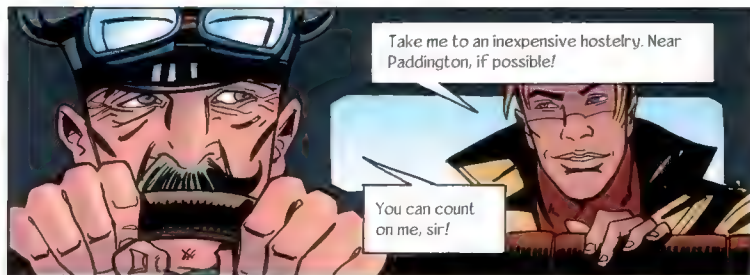
**KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK**

A cheque for a thousand pounds! Thank goodness! Now what? Has this Holmes forgotten something?



Mr McGrath, we have found the address of Mrs Revel for you!









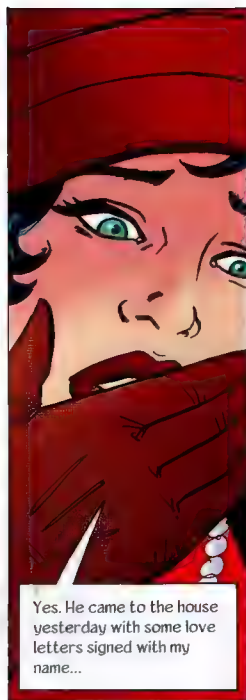
Excuse me! We haven't even been introduced to each other!

Eton and Oxford. Is that enough for you?

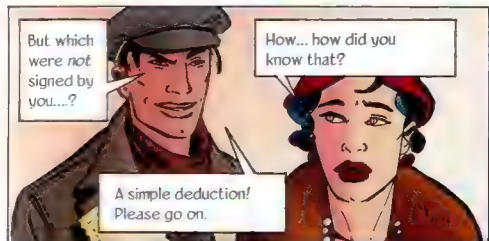


My God! The blackmailer!

What? You know this man?



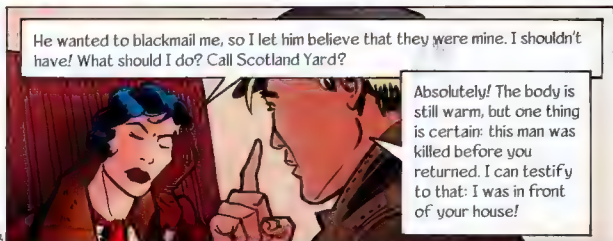
Yes. He came to the house yesterday with some love letters signed with my name...



But which were not signed by you....?

How... how did you know that?

A simple deduction! Please go on.



He wanted to blackmail me, so I let him believe that they were mine. I shouldn't have! What should I do? Call Scotland Yard?

Absolutely! The body is still warm, but one thing is certain: this man was killed before you returned. I can testify to that: I was in front of your house!



This man is Italian. He was a waiter, and his name was Giuseppe.

And who are you — Sherlock Holmes? How do you know all this? I don't even know your name!



Anthony Cade, at your service, ma'am.





Now, let's start our investigation... Mrs Revel, have you ever seen this pistol before?

Definitely not!



That's odd. So how do you account for this?

Oh! But that's impossible! I've never owned a gun!

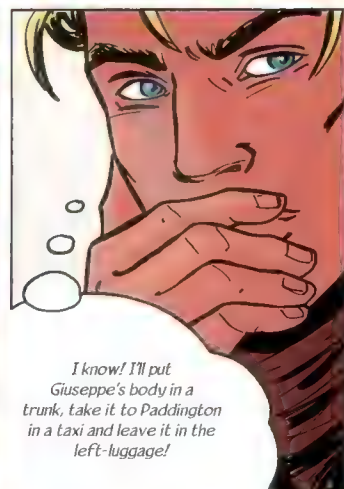


The person who killed Giuseppe obviously wanted to incriminate you for the murder. He knew that you wouldn't be at home this afternoon, but also that you would be back in time to find the body. And he must have known Giuseppe was coming here. One question: Do you have any enemies?

Maybe, but not of that kind!



I don't think we'll call the police, Mrs Revel... We shall have to dispose of the body instead. Send your maid away while I think of a way to proceed...



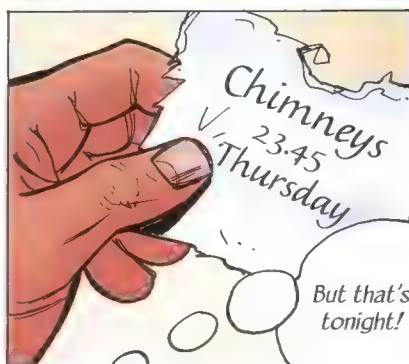
I know! I'll put Giuseppe's body in a trunk, take it to Paddington in a taxi and leave it in the left-luggage!



Then I'll leave London, and the job will be done!



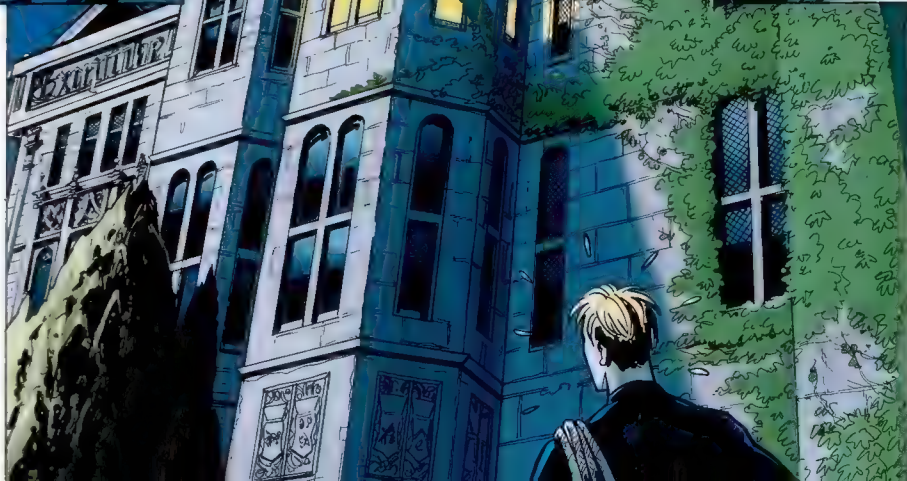
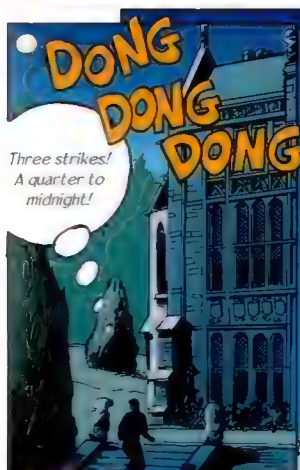
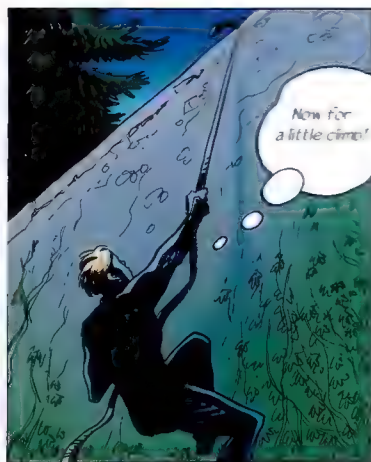
Hold on, what's this?



Chimneys  
23.45  
Thursday

But that's tonight!









THE NEXT MORNING...



What a terrible affair, Lord Caterham! A murder at Chimneys!

This is Dr Cartwright, and my assistant, Constable Johnson...

Thank you for coming so promptly, Inspector Badgworthy. The body is in the Council Chamber, where it was discovered.



Here you are, Inspector. This man was one of my guests for the weekend. His name was... er... Count Stanislaus. Isn't that right, Lomax?

Really?

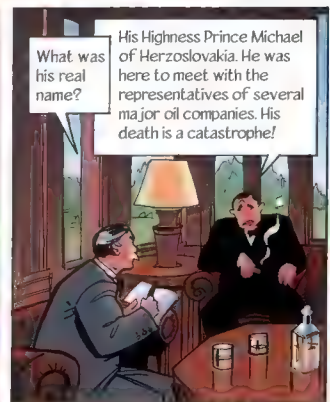


What's the local constabulary doing here? We need Scotland Yard! Superintendent Battle must be summoned at once! We must have the utmost discretion!



A LITTLE LATER...

Ah, Battle, come in quickly. You and I, we have to talk...



What was his real name?

His Highness Prince Michael of Herzoslovakia. He was here to meet with the representatives of several major oil companies. His death is a catastrophe!













Why, it's Mr Cade! What a pleasant surprise!

Mrs Revel! Delighted to meet you at Chimneys!

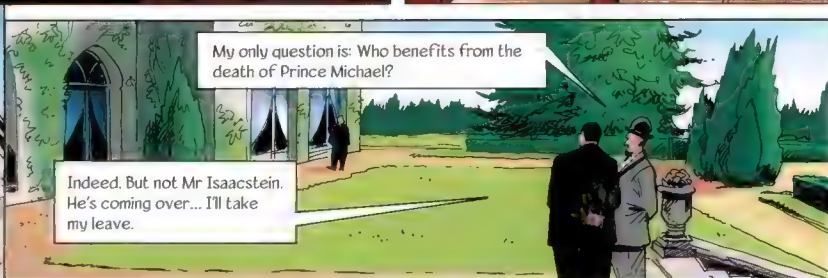


Is he a friend of yours, Virginia? He's quite a dish! Why don't you ask him to spend the weekend here...?



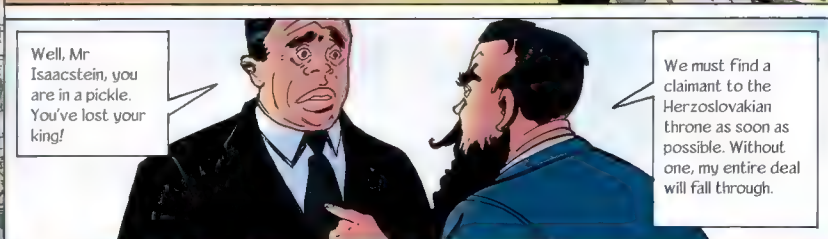
Fancy Virginia meeting an old friend. But it's rather a coincidence. And you, Battle, still certain of this dashing youth's innocence?

He seems sincere enough to me... But all the same, I'll verify his story with the South African authorities!



My only question is: Who benefits from the death of Prince Michael?

Indeed. But not Mr Isaacstein. He's coming over... I'll take my leave.



Well, Mr Isaacstein, you are in a pickle. You've lost your king!

We must find a claimant to the Herzoslovakian throne as soon as possible. Without one, my entire deal will fall through.



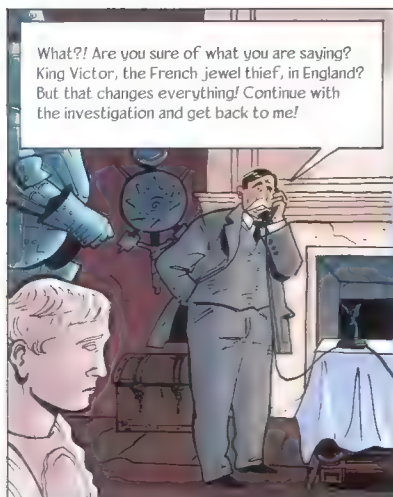
Well, I can only think of Prince Nicholas!



I don't know him. What do you know about him?

He is Prince Michael's cousin. He was expelled from Oxford, then he left for the Congo, where he disappeared for two years. Then he turned up a few months ago in America...





What?! Are you sure of what you are saying?  
King Victor, the French jewel thief, in England?  
But that changes everything! Continue with  
the investigation and get back to me!



What's "King" Victor doing  
in this country, Battle?

Why don't  
you tell me,  
Lomax?



Something to do with  
the koh-i-noor diamond...

Shh! Talk softly  
please, old chap!

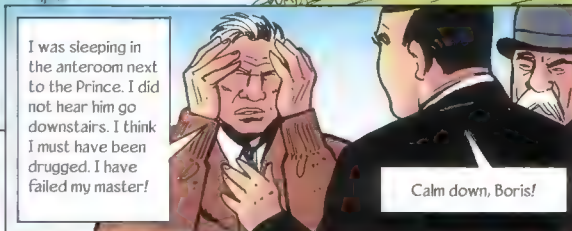
I've so many  
questions! But  
maybe King Victor  
shot Prince Michael?

Shh! Do be a bit more  
discreet, my dear  
Battle!



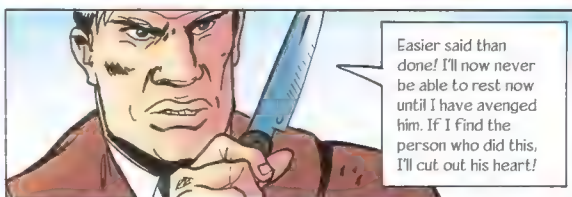
I'd like to ask Boris,  
Prince Michael's  
valet, some  
questions.

Indeed. Tell me, my  
good man, when did you  
last see your master?



I was sleeping in  
the anteroom next  
to the Prince. I did  
not hear him go  
downstairs. I think  
I must have been  
drugged. I have  
failed my master!

Calm down, Boris!



Easier said than  
done! I'll now never  
be able to rest now  
until I have avenged  
him. If I find the  
person who did this,  
I'll cut out his heart!



A native Herzoslovakian!  
Most uncivilized!





Lord Caterham is quite convinced of your innocence...

Superintendent Battle's not so sure. I have no alibi for last night.

But tell me, have you ever lived in Herzoslovakia?



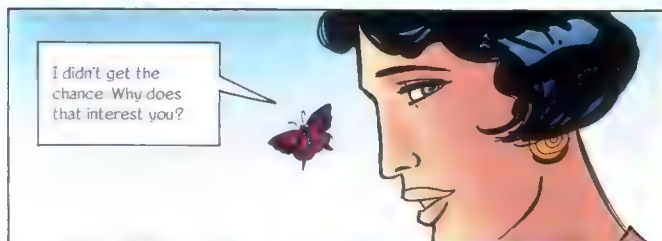
Did you ever meet Prince Michael Obolovitch?

Yes, I lived at the Embassy with my husband. Why?

Of course. He was a horrid little man! He asked me to marry him, even though I already had a husband!



I take it you didn't see the man who was killed here?



I didn't get the chance. Why does that interest you?



Because Count Stanislaus was none other than Prince Michael, who came here incognito...

What?! I thought he'd been avoiding me! So you reckon he was an imposter!



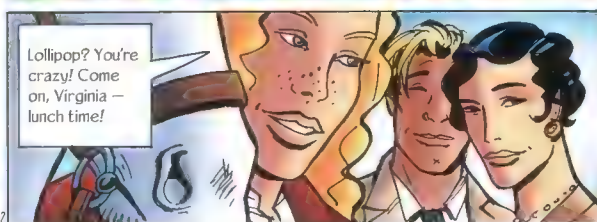
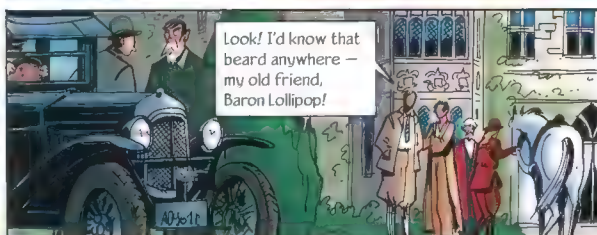
When I was here last night, one of the lights came on just after the shot...

According to Battle, no one inside the house heard it. It's very curious...



OK. My turn to ask you a question: Are you Anthony Cade or Jimmy McGrath?

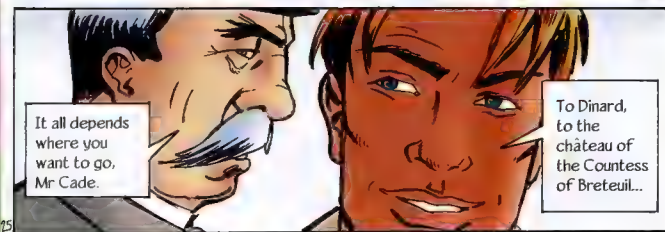
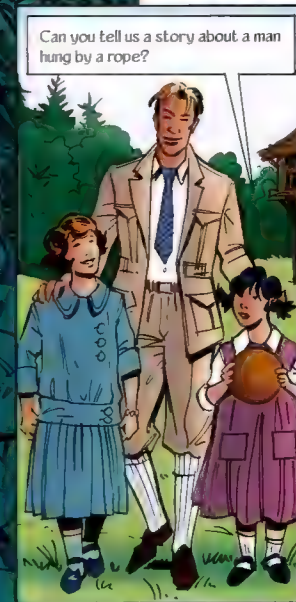
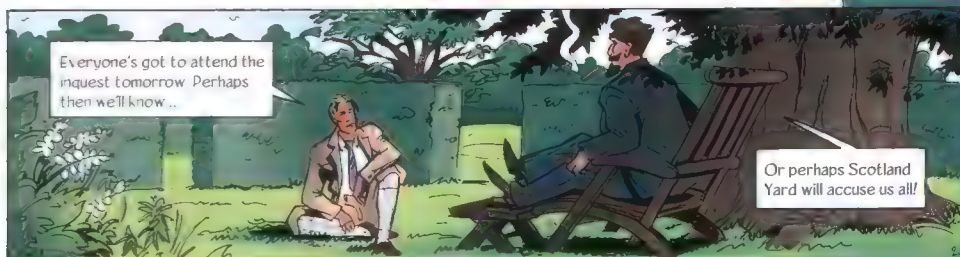




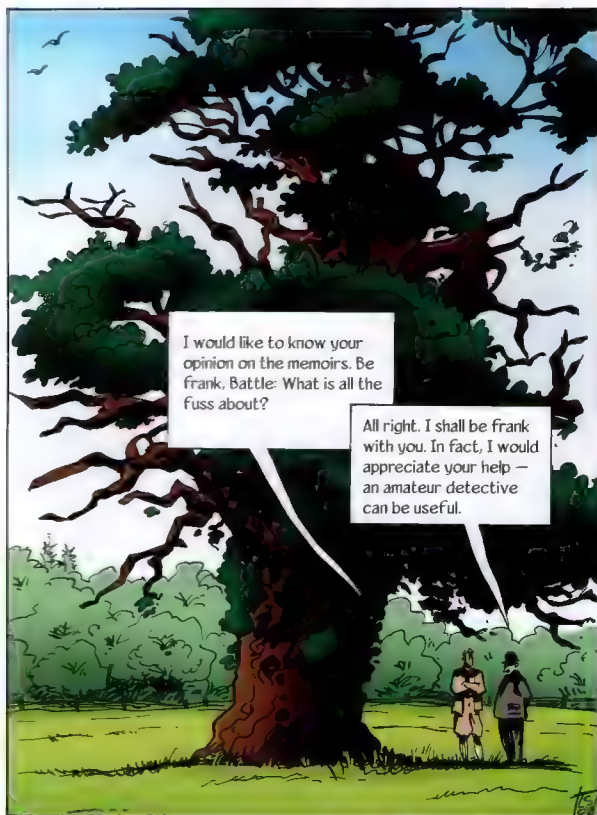












I would like to know your opinion on the memoirs. Be frank, Battle: What is all the fuss about?

All right. I shall be frank with you. In fact, I would appreciate your help — an amateur detective can be useful.

Then tell me: Who will succeed Prince Michael to the throne?

A good question! The next heir is his cousin, Prince Nicholas Obolovitch.

And where is he right now?

We've reason to believe he's in the United States.

At last I understand! Michael was supported by England and Nicholas by America... In both cases, a group of financiers is anxious to obtain oil concessions for their country. The Loyalist Party who backed Prince Michael now need another candidate! Am I right?



THAT EVENING...

Who the devil are you?

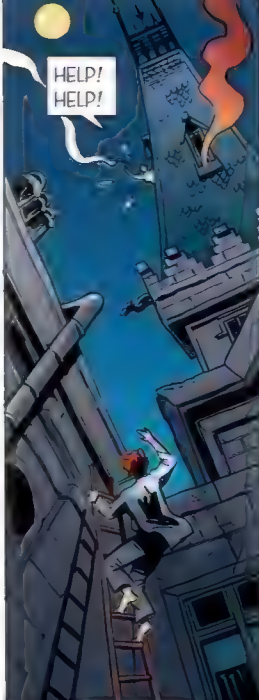
I am Boris Anchoukoff, Prince Michael's valet... My master is dead and I would like to serve you, sir... I shall be loyal to you until death!

This is damned awkward. What a curious fellow!

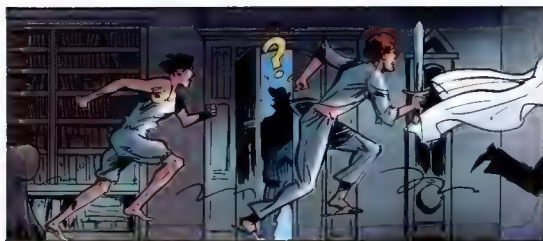
I guess I could use a valet — or a bodyguard!

I do not ask for money, master. Just to serve.











THE NEXT AFTERNOON...

Ah, Battle! You came down to make sure that I returned like I promised, eh?

Not at all! I happen to be leaving for London!

Did you discover anything from the Countess of Breteuil?

I drew a blank! Miss Brun is very respectable. I shall concentrate on the suspicious French guest at the Jolly Cricketer's.

You mean Monsieur Chelles? He's a travelling sales representative. We've been watching him. If you want to follow someone, try and find King Victor, celebrated jewel thief and master of disguise!

King Victor? Hmm, I've heard of him. Isn't he in prison?

That's what we'd like to know! For all we know, he could be here planning a crime!

BACK AT CHIMNEYS...

Good Lord! Now I get it! From where I was before, I was looking at the wrong window...!

Tell me, Tredwell, who has the third room from the end on the west side?

That would be the American gentleman's room, sir. Mr Fish.





Hello, Mr Isaacstein!

Mr Cade... If you'd been here, you could've witnessed a burglary attempt. Apparently someone was searching the Council Chamber, although I slept through the whole thing!



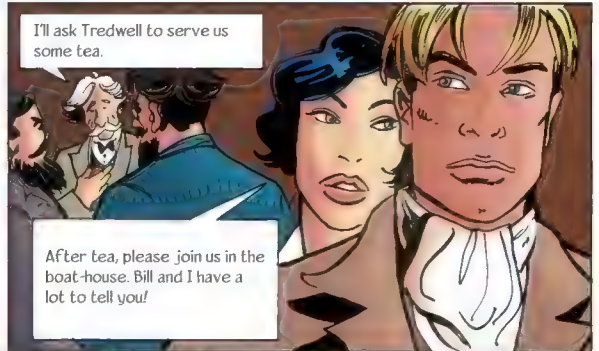
Oh, really?!

Amateur crooks! Thanks to them, the police still won't let us leave! We are imprisoned in this accursed house!



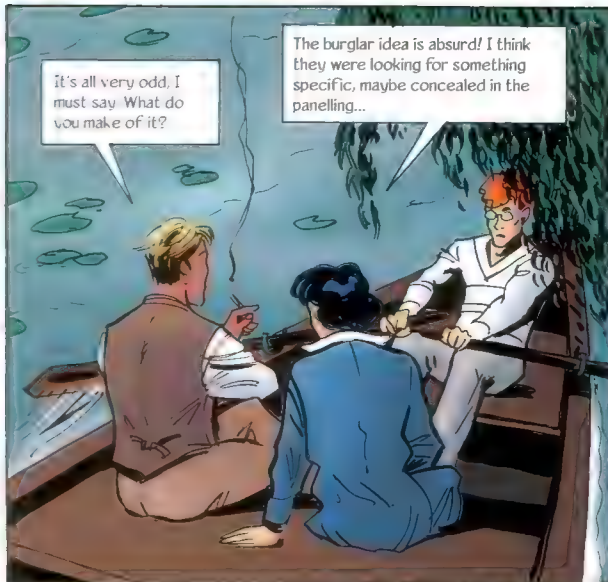
Back so soon, Anthony? Have you heard all about our adventures last night?

Can you imagine? I took Mrs Revel for one of the thugs!



I'll ask Tredwell to serve us some tea.

After tea, please join us in the boat-house. Bill and I have a lot to tell you!



It's all very odd, I must say. What do you make of it?

The burglar idea is absurd! I think they were looking for something specific, maybe concealed in the panelling...



You say that there were two of them, but Bill only chased one. The second person must be someone from the house!

It was the middle of the night, yet Hiram Fish was fully dressed. And Herman Isaacstein slept through it all! Both rather suspicious!

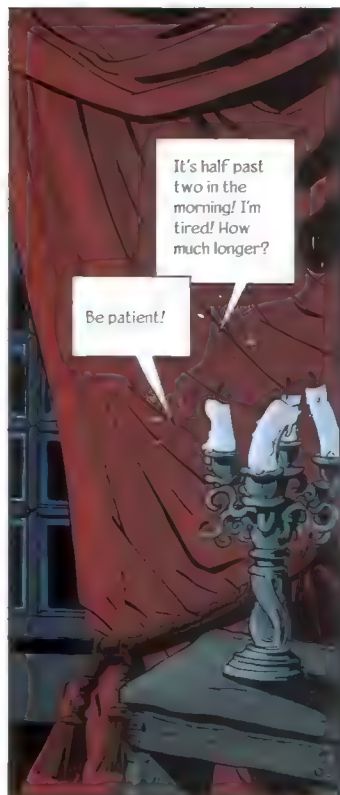


THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...

Shh... Don't make a sound!

I'm sure they'll come back tonight to find whatever they were looking for yesterday...

With Superintendent Battle in London, they'll think no one is on guard!



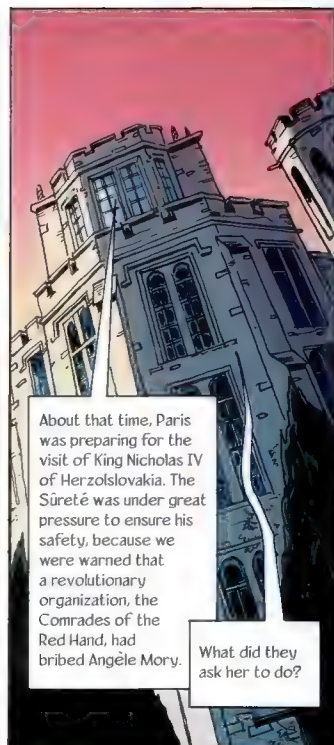




We at the Sûreté have never been able to prove that Captain O'Neill and King Victor were the same person, but we do know that at that time there was a clever young actress at the *Folies-Bergères* by the name of Angèle Morv. We believe that she was King Victor's accomplice.



Have you heard of our famous and fantastic King Victor? Fluent in five languages and a master of disguise, he carried out a series of daring robberies in Paris under the assumed name of Captain O'Neill.



About that time, Paris was preparing for the visit of King Nicholas IV of Herzoslovakia. The Sûreté was under great pressure to ensure his safety, because we were warned that a revolutionary organization, the Comrades of the Red Hand, had bribed Angèle Morv.

What did they ask her to do?



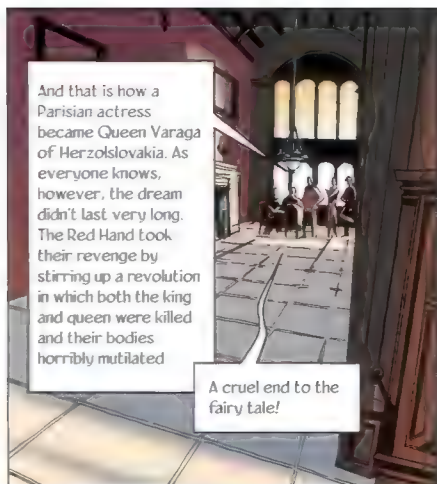
She had to seduce the young king and lure him into a trap!

But the young lady was even more ambitious than the Red Hand had thought...



In fact, Angèle captivated the king so well that he fell desperately in love with her!





And that is how a Parisian actress became Queen Varaga of Herzoslovakia. As everyone knows, however, the dream didn't last very long. The Red Hand took their revenge by stirring up a revolution in which both the king and queen were killed and their bodies horribly mutilated

A cruel end to the fairy tale!



It seems certain that Angèle Mory still kept in touch with King Victor, alias Captain O'Neill! They wrote to each other in a secret code. And in case their letters were discovered, the queen used the name of an honourable lady at the British Embassy.

Of course! She used myname!

What cheek!

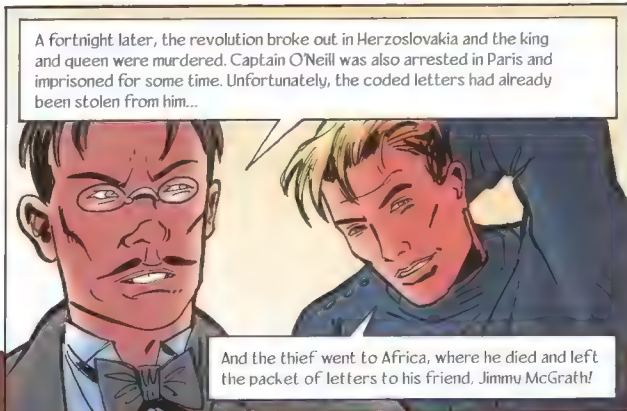
So do you see? When Nicholas IV and Queen Varaga came to Chimneys for the meeting seven years ago, the famous koh-i-noor diamond was removed from the crown jewels and a fake diamond put in its place.



Only King Victor was expert enough to create such a good replica and replace the diamond... As it has never been found, we believe the queen hid it somewhere in this house — and it must still be here!

That's unbelievable!

After so many years??



A fortnight later, the revolution broke out in Herzoslovakia and the king and queen were murdered. Captain O'Neill was also arrested in Paris and imprisoned for some time. Unfortunately, the coded letters had already been stolen from him...

And the thief went to Africa, where he died and left the packet of letters to his friend, Jimmy McGrath!

Although we've managed to keep the theft secret, it appears that Count Styltitch, who was staying at Chimneys and had witnessed the events, has blurted out the truth in his memoirs...

But maybe the manuscript also give a clue as to where exactly the diamond was hidden?





Perhaps... But we think the count used his knowledge of the theft to blackmail the queen

Count Styplitch knew lots of secrets. When Jimmy gave me the manuscript, he said he'd met the count when saving him from a band of ruffians in Paris. The count confided to him that he knew where the Koh-i-noor was, and that King Victor's men were trying to kill him. It made no sense to me at the time!



Don't forget that King Victor believes in honour among thieves — he has never killed anyone!

Supposing someone surprised him when he was searching for the jewel? Is he definitely in England?



He gave us the slip. He sailed to America, to the United States, where he passed himself off as Prince Nicholas of Herzoslovakia!

Though Prince Nicholas was rumoured to have died in the Congo years ago, King Victor convinced the Americans and swindled them out of a fortune! Sooner or later, he'll be back here to find the diamond!



Why didn't you come earlier and warn us about this, Lemoine?

I'm sorry, Battle. I thought it would be better if I didn't. You see, I was here in secret last night...

It was you I chased, then?



Yes, Monsieur Eversleigh! I was watching someone search the room, but he heard you and went and hid somewhere.

Then we burst in and saw you!

So, do you think this cat burglar is one of the guests?




Why not?

Perhaps a servant. How about Boris, Prince Michael's ex-valet...?


That's hardly worthy of you, Monsieur Lemoine! I've taken him into my service now and I trust him completely!





The sun's coming up. It's been a long night! One last thing, Mr Cade. When I went up to London, a body had been found in a trunk at Paddington Station... It seems he's a certain Giuseppe Manuelli, a waiter at the Blitz Hotel.

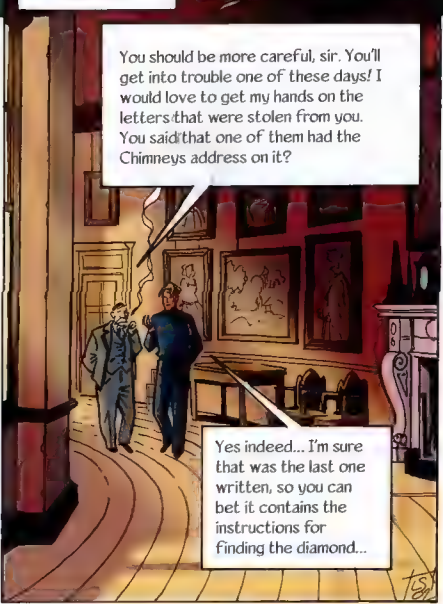
So why are you telling me? Do you think he was killed there or that he was shot somewhere else and his body brought there later?



Shot, Mr Cade? An interesting deduction. Do you have any ideas of your own?

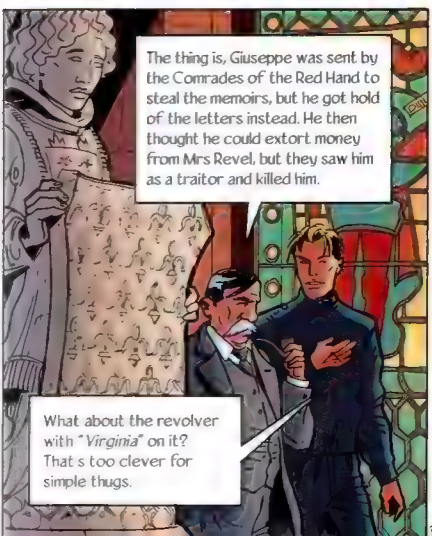
Er, actually, I did it. I mean, I brought his dead body there in the trunk. I believe he was shot by the Red Hand. I think I'd better tell you the whole story...

AND SO...




You should be more careful, sir. You'll get into trouble one of these days! I would love to get my hands on the letters that were stolen from you. You said that one of them had the Chimneys address on it?

Yes indeed... I'm sure that was the last one written, so you can bet it contains the instructions for finding the diamond...




The thing is, Giuseppe was sent by the Comrades of the Red Hand to steal the memoirs, but he got hold of the letters instead. He then thought he could extort money from Mrs Revel, but they saw him as a traitor and killed him.

What about the revolver with "Virginia" on it? That's too clever for simple thugs.

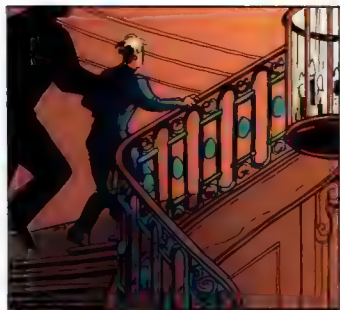


I shouldn't wonder if the Comrades and King Victor aren't working together. But if the Red Hand have read the letters, they'll now know where to look for the Koh-i-noor!



I suppose you're going to tell me that you have a plan...?

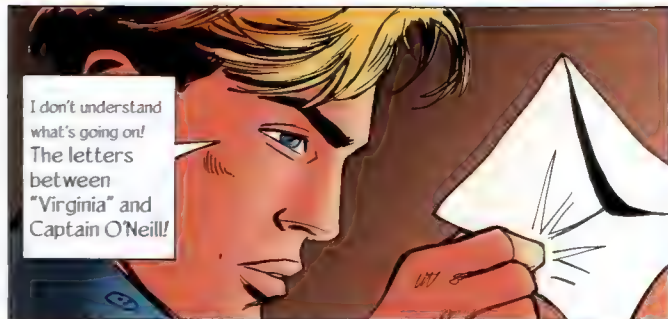




A quick bath and a hearty breakfast will do me good!



Huh? Who put these here? My brain must be cracking!

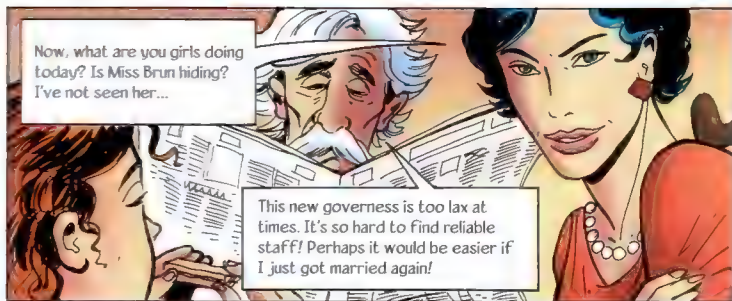


I don't understand what's going on! The letters between "Virginia" and Captain O'Neill!



...but I couldn't argue. Not before breakfast!

I know what you mean! I'm frightfully sleepy after last night!



Now, what are you girls doing today? Is Miss Brun hiding? I've not seen her...

This new governess is too lax at times. It's so hard to find reliable staff! Perhaps it would be easier if I just got married again!



AT TEN O'CLOCK...

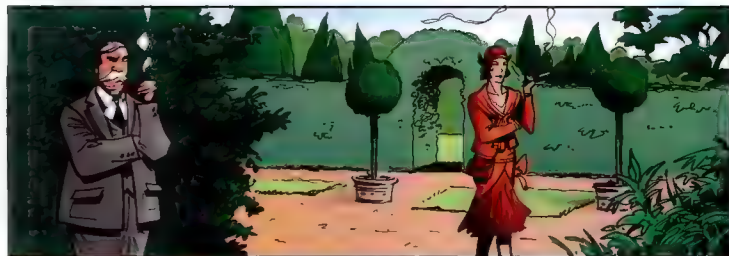
Has Superintendent Battle spoken to you, Father?

Hmm? Yes, he wants me to ask everyone to remain at Chimneys a little longer. The strain on my nerves...!



Father, why don't you ask Virginia to marry you? That way, she could be my stepma and the handsome Anthony could focus his attention on me!











WYVERN ABBEY, GEORGE LOMAX'S RESIDENCE...

Here are the famous letters that Mr Cade found in his room. My theory is that King Victor himself returned them because he couldn't read them.

Because they are in code, you mean?

These letters must be decoded without delay. Professor Wymwood from the British Museum is an expert code breaker — he's on his way over. And I want Bill Eversleigh back here!

A LITTLE LATER AT CHIMNEYS...

Battle! You know Mr Isaacstein's already left for the station? He seemed distressed...

Yes, Lemoine found the revolver in his suitcase... He's going to get a shock when he reaches London!

Of course! King Victor is well aware by now that the Council Chamber is being watched. I think he'll wait for us to decode the letters, find the hiding place, and then strike!

Sorry chaps, looks like the excitement is over! I wish I could stay!

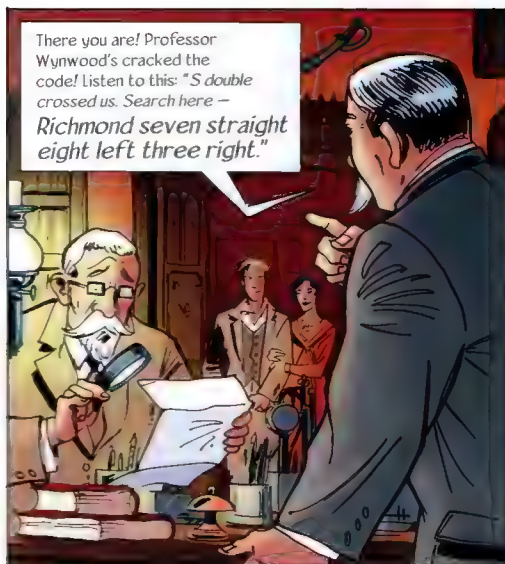
What? I would never have suspected Isaacstein of wanting to kill Prince Michael!

It was a bit of a surprise! Can you tell Bill that George Lomax wants him back at the Abbey? Then join me inside...

Well, that's convenient! Bill can get a bit... *enthusiastic!* Whereas you are very cool for a man who takes so many risks! Did your friend Boris find you?

Yes. He'd got a card with a Dover address on it. I think it dropped out of Isaacstein's suitcase!





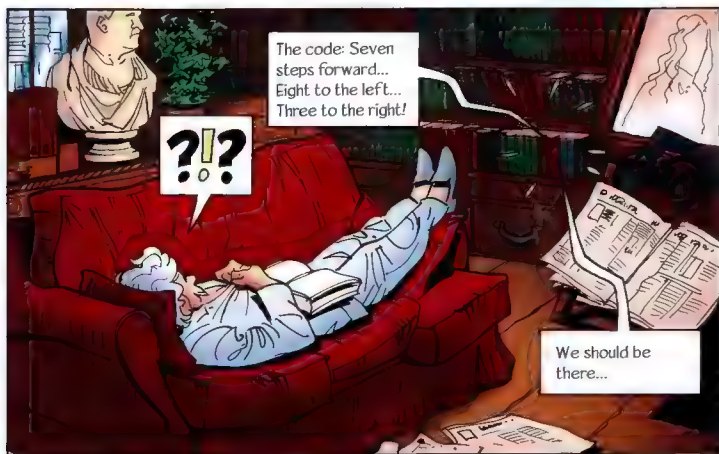
There you are! Professor Wynwood's cracked the code! listen to this: "S double crossed us. Search here — Richmond seven straight eight left three right."



"S" must be Styltitch. But Richmond? Oh yes! The Holbein portrait of the Earl of Richmond in the Council Chamber! Let's ask Bundle...



Of course! There's an underground passage behind the Holbein painting, but it doesn't go anywhere. It's been blocked for years. We used to play in it — I'll show you!



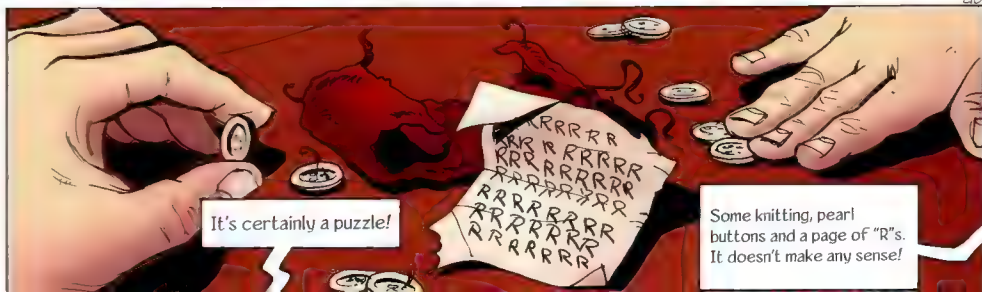
The code: Seven steps forward... Eight to the left... Three to the right!

?!?

We should be there...



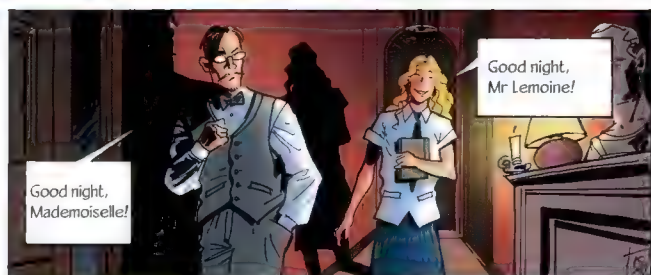
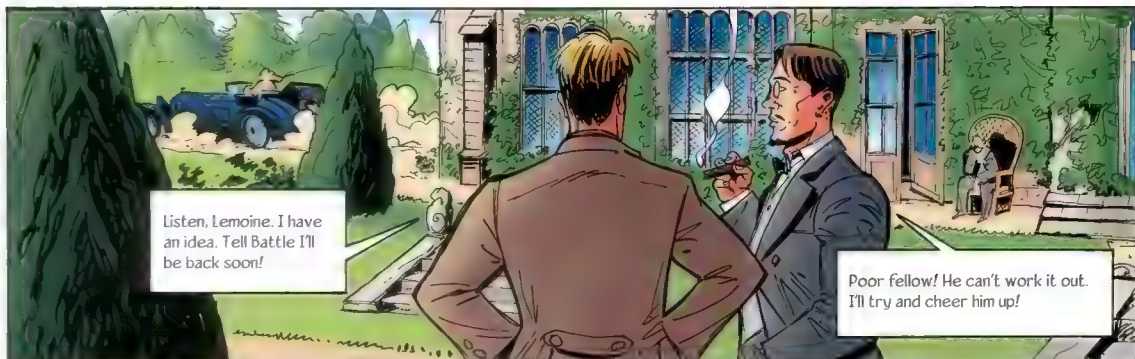
Good Lord! I think we've been tricked!



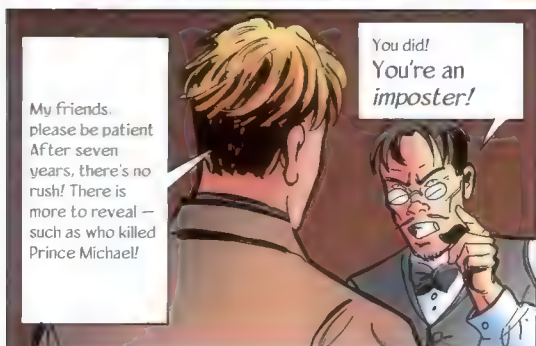
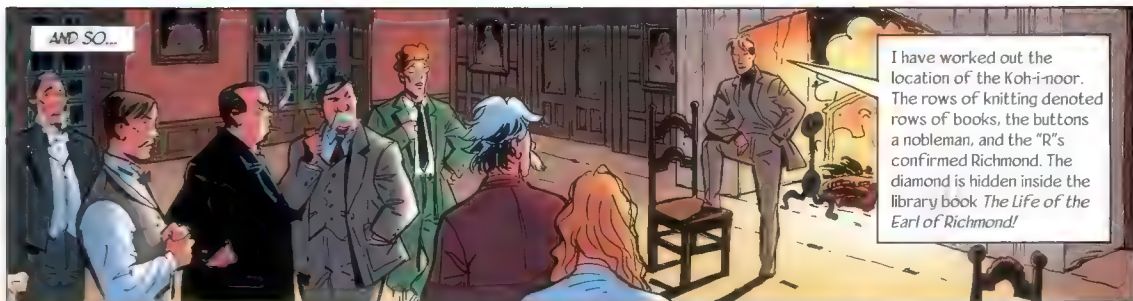
It's certainly a puzzle!

Some knitting, pearl buttons and a page of "R"s. It doesn't make any sense!













Look out, sir! She killed my master and now she's... Oof!

What? Boris!



Careful!

Oh!



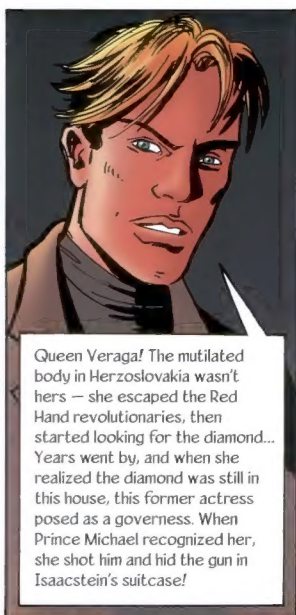
A woman?!

My God! But that's Miss Brun!



No! The real Miss Brun from Dinard never arrived. This imposter has been avoiding Virginia since she arrived — *she knew her!*

Knew Mrs Revel? But how? If she's not a real governess, who is she?



Queen Veraga! The mutilated body in Herzoslovakia wasn't hers — she escaped the Red Hand revolutionaries, then started looking for the diamond... Years went by, and when she realized the diamond was still in this house, this former actress posed as a governess. When Prince Michael recognized her, she shot him and hid the gun in Isaacstein's suitcase!



So you say she killed Prince Michael while she was looking for the diamond? Perhaps she was really waiting to meet King Victor?

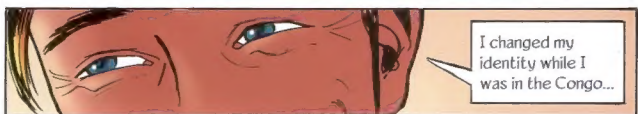
You are persistent, Lemoine! But I have one more surprise for you!



Allow me to present to you the *real* Monsieur Lemoine from the French Sûreté! I rescued him today from a house in Dover. I think you dropped the address!

?







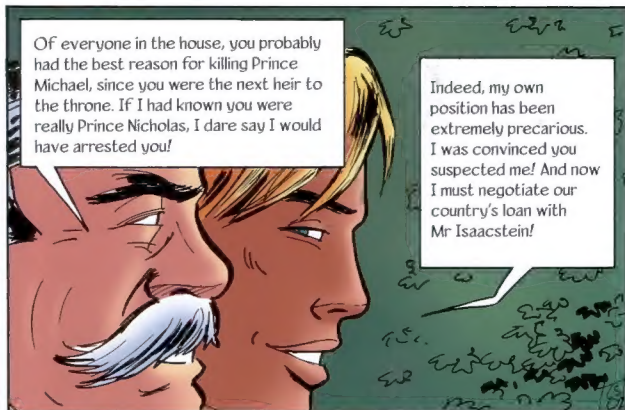


Poor Boris! He is upset that the pistol went off in his struggle with Miss Brun. It's amazing that he attached himself to me — he couldn't have known that I was his master's cousin!

Instinct! Like a dog! He must have recognized some similarity. It's a pity my instincts are a bit rusty or I'd have solved the case myself...



How lucky can one person be? Becoming a king and marrying Virginia, all in one day!



Of everyone in the house, you probably had the best reason for killing Prince Michael, since you were the next heir to the throne. If I had known you were really Prince Nicholas, I dare say I would have arrested you!

Indeed, my own position has been extremely precarious. I was convinced you suspected me! And now I must negotiate our country's loan with Mr Isaacstein!



It's a shame we never found the diamond!

Hmm... It would have made a lovely wedding present for Queen Virginia!



Hullo, Nick, old boy! This is a great girl you've found yourself!



Jimmy McGrath!  
What are you doing here?





**THE END**